

Regional Comprehensive Plan

January 2005

Tying It All Together

People familiar with SCAG know that we produce a number of plans. Between the Regional Transportation Plan, the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, the Regional Housing Needs Assessment, and now, the Compass Growth Vision, we have a lot to say about the future of the region. Taken as a whole, these plans chart a course for the region's development, and lay out a vision for the physical shape and well-being of Southern California.

The problem is, if you are a local planner or official, a business person, a developer, or an investor, you will probably never piece together the region's plans and strategies. You certainly will not be able to put them to much use. That is where SCAG's new Regional Comprehensive Plan comes in.

The Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) takes the full body of planning and policy work produced by SCAG and ties it together. The idea is that, in one document, the people who are actually implementing programs and projects in the region can understand and benefit from the region's planning work.

For SCAG, this RCP is about implementation. SCAG is obligated to see that its planning work becomes reality on the ground. In particular, as part of the Regional Transportation Plan Environmental Impact Report, SCAG committed to a number of mitigation measures, all of which will be included in the RCP. Beyond that, in order for the various transportation investments made by SCAG to be efficient and effective, the region will have to develop, more or less, the way we envisioned.

For users of the plan, primarily local planners and elected officials, the RCP is about understanding the regional context. There are a number of instances in planning where a local agency needs to be aware of the regional setting, particularly in preparing a general plan or an EIR. In the long run, it just makes good sense for a local government to know how their project might fit, or not fit, within the region's transportation, land use, and resource management systems.

SCAG runs an on-going program – Inter Governmental Review (IGR) - to help local governments analyze the regional context when pursuing local projects. SCAG uses its RCP to conduct these reviews. In turn, local governments can consult the RCP so that they have an understanding going in of what SCAG will look for.

SCAG is creating the plan during the current fiscal year. A staff team is reviewing and organizing the existing body of SCAG policy work, and developing actions plans or “menus” of options for local governments and other outside entities.

The policy review and action plan will be the centerpiece of each plan chapter. Staff will present a draft plan for the Regional Council's consideration at the end of the current fiscal year (July 2005).

Staff's activities in creating the RCP are being directed by a 10 member task force composed of members of the Regional Council. The Task Force meets monthly and is chaired by Mayor Pam O'Connor of Santa Monica. At each meeting the Task Force reviews two chapter topics, gives direction to staff on completing the draft chapters, and prepares a report to SCAG's policy committees.

The RCP will feature nine chapters, each based on a specific area of planning or resource management. The chapters are: land use and housing, economy and education, transportation, homeland security, water, solid waste, energy, air quality, and open space and habitat conservation.

The plan as a whole will feature the Compass Growth Vision as an overriding theme. Each chapter will discuss how that topic relates to the region's adopted preferred growth pattern. At the same time, the plan will capture and record the on-going efforts to develop tools for implementing Compass at the local and sub-regional level.

Anyone interested in participating in the development of the plan is welcome. Attending the monthly meetings of the RCP Task Force is a good way to start. Additionally, staff is available to make presentations on the planning process to groups around the region. Contact Jacob Lieb at (213) 236-1921, or lieb@scag.ca.gov, for more information.